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ABSTRACT

A study, using both qualitative and quantitative data, examined factors affecting job placement of former secondary vocational education students. The study involved the following four data collection procedures: (1) analysis of existing data concerning educational, social, and economic factors for all 50 states, with a more detailed analysis of data in 584 local education agencies in seven states, (2) questionnaires sent to 22,000 respondents in 62 local secondary education sites in the seven states, (3) a comprehensive review of literature, and (4) case studies conducted in eight local secondary education sites in seven states. The dependent variable for the study was the percentage of former secondary vocational education students from a local education agency employed in a field related to their training. Data revealed eight major categories of factors affecting job placement of these students. The factors are community; labor market; education; philosophy; legislation, regulation, and funding mechanisms; curriculum; teachers; and admissions. Other factors isolated include student clubs and community and school concurrence in viewing vocationally educated students as a valued economic resource. (A selected bibliography is included.) (MN)

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FACTORS AFFECTING JOB PLACEMENT OF FORMER SECONDARY VOCATIONAL EDUCATION STUDENTS

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this paper is to briefly present a synthesis of the preliminary findings and emerging general impressions from a project which uses qualitative and quantitative data. The project, "Factors Affecting Job Placement in Vocational Education", was funded by the U.S. Department of Education through the National Center for Research in Vocational Education at the Ohio State University. The purpose of the project was to determine those factors affecting job placement that can be used in establishing policy and in making decisions to improve vocational education at the federal, state, and local levels. The objectives of the project were:

- To identify factors relating positively or negatively to the placement of former secondary vocational education students in jobs related to their training.
- To provide a detailed description of the education and community processes which appear to influence the placement of former secondary vocational education students in jobs related to their training.
- To generate hypotheses concerning variables about the placement of former secondary vocational education students in jobs related to their training.

Another phase of the study addresses similar objectives for postsecondary vocational-technical education programs.

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* The study reported herein was funded by the U.S. Department of Education as a part of the contract for The National Center for Research in Vocational Education. This report of the study is preliminary. The study reports are scheduled to be completed on June 30, 1981 and January 31, 1982. Reports of the study findings will not be released by the National Center or the U.S. Department of Education until after June 30, 1981 and January 31, 1982.

DEPENDENT VARIABLE

The dependent variable for the study was the percentage of former secondary vocational education students from a local education agency employed in a field related to their training. In most states this information was reported by local education agencies to state education agencies. In other states the information was obtained through statewide follow-up of former students.

STUDY PROCEDURES

Several procedures were used to achieve the project objectives. The following list briefly summarizes the research procedures used to study the factors influencing the placement of former secondary vocational education students in jobs related to their training.

- Existing data concerning educational, social, and economic factors were analyzed for all fifty states, with a more detailed analysis of data in 584 local education agencies in seven states.
- Questionnaires were developed and sent to 22,000 respondents in sixty-two local secondary education sites located in the seven states.
- A comprehensive review of the literature was conducted.
- Case studies were conducted in eight local secondary education sites in the seven states. These eight case study sites were included as a part of the mail questionnaire sites.

The final report of the study, due in mid-1981, will be organized around the major emerging issues or factors related to the job placement of former secondary vocational education students. Quantitative and qualitative information will be synthesized and presented for each of the issues or factors. At the time this paper was written, the data analysis for the mail questionnaire phase had not been completed. Therefore, the findings presented in the paper represent information from the analysis of existing data, the review of literature, and the case studies.

Sampling

In the first stage of sampling, seven states were selected to participate in the study. These states were selected on the basis of the states having an operating management information system and a strong commitment to secondary vocational education programs. Consideration was given to selecting states which

would provide as much geographical representation as possible. Key officials in the states had to indicate a willingness to participate in the study.

In the second sampling stage local education agencies (LEAs) which would serve as sites for the questionnaire phase of the study were selected. Only the 584 LEAs in the seven states which had five or more vocational education programs (as defined by the six-digit USOE code number) were included at this stage. The 584 LEAs in the seven states were stratified on the basis of three major variables:

- Community or resident type (metro, nonmetro). Metro was defined as located in a Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area (SMSA). Nonmetro was defined as not located in an SMSA.

- Average job placement rate of LEA (high, low). By establishing a median split for the 584 job placement rates, it was determined that 54.3 percent and above would be "high" placement rates and below 54.3 percent would be "low" placement rates.

- Labor market demand in LEA (high, low). High labor market demand was defined as having unemployment rates of 5.9 percent and below. Low labor market demand was defined as having unemployment rates of 6.0 and above.

The classifications of community type (metro, nonmetro), labor market demand (high, low), and job placement rate (high, low), resulted in a 2 x 2 x 2 design with eight cells.

Once the 584 LEAs had been stratified, an attempt was made to randomly select nine LEAs from each of the eight cells to serve as mail questionnaire sites. Ultimately, sixty-two of the seventy-two sites selected agreed to participate in the study.

In the final stage of sampling for the mail questionnaire phase of the study individuals were selected from among the eleven respondent groups at each of the sixty-two LEAs. Due to the small numbers, every member of six of the respondent groups at each site received a questionnaire. These groups were: (1) local vocational education director, (2) high school principal, (3) vocational education teachers, (4) counselors, (5) job placement specialists, and (6) local vocational education advisory committee members. Because of the cost constraints and the large size of the remaining five respondent groups, a sample was selected for (1) current vocational education students, (2) former vocational education students, (3) mothers of current and former vocational education students, (4) fathers of current and former vocational education students, and (5) employers.

For the case study phase of the project, eight sites were selected in the seven states. These selections were based on judgment and resulted in the selection of one site in each of six states and two sites in one state. Four of the case study sites were classified as "high" placement rate sites and four of the sites were classified as "low" placement sties. Some of the sites represented very large and complex secondary school systems while other sites were in small districts with limited student enrollments.

In the phase of the study analyzing existing data, two separate data bases were used. These data bases were: (1) aggregate data for all fifty states, and (2) the 584 LEAs within the previously mentioned seven states.

In summary, the study procedures used in the project consisted of a comprehensive review of the literature, an analysis of existing data from seven states and 584 local education agencies, case studies in eight local sites, and the mailing of questionnaires to eleven respondent groups in sixty-two local education agencies

FRAMEWORK

Early results from the literature review led to the development of an heuristic framework which guided the design and implementation of the other approaches used in the study. The heuristic framework was not considered as much a predictive schema as a method of categorizing items in experience. It ordered existing knowledge to determine what ideas were clearly untenable, which ones had at least some support, and which ones needed to be studied further. (Wirt and Kirst, 1972). Figure 1 displays the heuristic framework developed for the study.

The heuristic framework reflected those categories of variables that, based on extensive literature review, discussions with consultants, and the experience of the National Center staff, seemed to be appropriate starting points for identifying and organizing possibly relevant factors. The framework was used for developing the quesitonnaires, for analyzing the existing data, and for considering the possible information to be collected in the case studies.

It was obvious from the framework that the number of factors affecting job placement could be limitless. It was also readily apparent that vocational educators could have very limited to no control over most of the factors affecting job placement. In order to more effectively focus the study, most of the effort was concentrated on those factors the National Center staff believed could be manipulated by vocational educators.

HEURISTIC FRAMEWORK DISPLAYING EXAMPLES OF FACTORS INFLUENCING JOB PLACEMENT

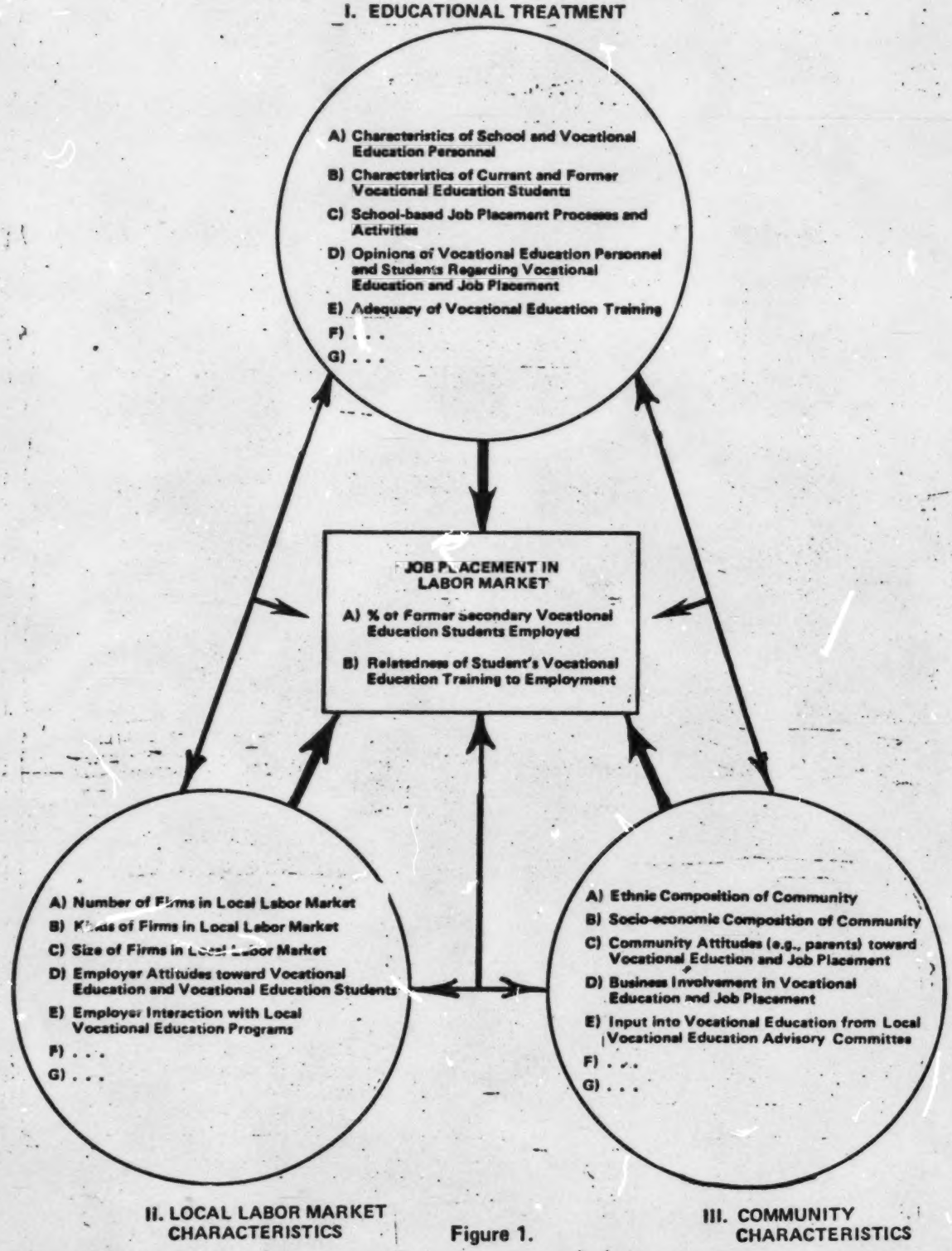
I. EDUCATIONAL TREATMENT
A) Characteristics of School and Vocational Education Personnel
B) Characteristics of Current and Former Vocational Education Students
C) School-based Job Placement Processes and Activities
D) Opinions of Vocational Education Personnel and Students Regarding Vocational Education and Job Placement
E) Adequacy of Vocational Education Training
F) . . .
G) . . .
JOB PLACEMENT IN LABOR MARKET
A) % of Former Secondary Vocational Education Students Employed
B) Relatedness of Student's Vocational Education Training to Employment
A) Number of Firms in Local Labor Market
B) Kinds of Firms in Local Labor Market
C) Size of Firms in Local Labor Market
D) Employer Attitudes toward Vocational Education and Vocational Education Students
E) Employer Interaction with Local Vocational Education Programs
F) . . .
G) . . .
A) Ethnic Composition of Community
B) Socio-economic Composition of Community
C) Community Attitudes (e.g., parents) toward Vocational Eduction and Job Placement
D) Business Involvement in Vocational Education and Job Placement
E) Input into Vocational Education from Local Vocational Education Advisory Committee
F) . . .
G) . . .
II. LOCAL LABOR MARKET CHARACTERISTICS
III. COMMUNITY CHARACTERISTICS

Figure 1.

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The following section presents a synthesis of the major findings to date.

FINDINGS

The findings presented in this report were derived from the analysis of eight case studies, a review of the literature, and an analysis of existing data.

The findings are presented by the major categories represented in the heuristic framework. The major categories are subdivided according to factors emerging from the data analysis. Readers should note that when the findings from the questionnaires are integrated with the other study findings that the general impressions may be altered.

Community

A number of community factors emerged as relevant to the placement of former secondary students in jobs related to their training. The size of the community appeared to correlate negatively with the job placement rate. The analysis of existing data from 584 local education agencies within the seven states selected for this study indicated that larger communities tend to have lower placement rates. One explanation may be that smaller communities generally had smaller industries which typically hired more former vocational education students for jobs related to their training. Other explanations may be that teachers in larger communities were less familiar with the greater number of businesses or that employers in large communities had less familiarity with the vocational education programs.

In small communities interviewees agreed that "everybody knows everybody", which facilitated the job placement process. Teachers and employers had many opportunities to interact casually during which they exchanged information about job openings and suitable candidates among current and former students. Most employers were aware of potential employees through relatives and direct contact with vocational education teachers. In some communities where the business and industries were small and required skills that were being taught in the vocational education programs, placement rates were high. At other relatively small case study sites, however, the lack of opportunites for jobs, especially in training-related fields, appeared to be a factor contributing to lower placement rates. The businesses and industries at these sites offered few entry-level positions in areas related to the school vocational education programs.

Another relevant factor that emerged from the analysis of existing data was the median education level of the community. The negative relationship of higher educational levels with placement rates indicated that students from communities where the median education level was higher were less prone to take jobs in training-related fields. This finding may indicate that students in communities with higher median education levels made career choices from a broader range of alternatives, including continuing their education or working in non-training related jobs.

Labor Market

The labor market demand was regarded as important in the literature reviewed and appeared to play an important a role in interviewee perceptions of job placement rates. Findings from the analysis of existing data supported the commonly-held opinion that placement was low when unemployment was high. Analysis of case study data corroborated the correlations of high labor demand with high placement and low labor demand with low placements. The median unemployment rate of the four high placement sites was 4.08 percent which contrasted with the rate of 7.08 percent at the four low placement sites.

A further analysis of the data indicated that extremely high labor demand may be detrimental to high placement in training-related jobs. Former students and dropouts were presumably motivated to take non-training related jobs which paid higher wages, especially in communities with rapid growth.

The economic and social stability of communities correlated positively with higher placement rates. Fluctuations in economic and population growth with concomitant growth in the educational system appeared to dislodge traditional relationships between employers and teachers. This finding indicates that stable communities were more conducive settings for higher job placement. Economic growth also appeared to entice students to drop out of school to seek employment, thereby competing for jobs typically held by vocational education graduates.

The percent of 18 and 19 year olds in the labor market correlated negatively with placement rates. Placement rates were lower in communities with a higher percent of labor market participation by this age group. An implication of this finding is that former vocational students may not have had an advantage over untrained applicants for many jobs held by 18 and 19 year olds.

Education

Job placement, as illustrated previously in the heuristic framework is hypothesized to occur as a result of the interaction among the community, labor market and education arenas. Educators have limited opportunities to influence factors in the

community and in the labor market. They have minimal input into federal and state legislation, regulations or funding procedures. Educators have considerably more opportunities to influence factors that determine or impinge upon job placement in the educational setting. A complex set of factors emerged as salient in varying degrees from the case studies, the review of literature, and the analysis of existing data.

The interaction of several factors was found to be more significant in many cases than the discrete factors. The degrees of importance differed from case site to case site. Several factors which consistantly appeared to be more significant than others in the education arena are presented.

Philosophy. The philosophical positions of relevant individuals and agencies regarding vocational education and subsequent job placement were found to be most important in determining an environment conducive to high job placement. The lack of consistent philosophies between state and local level administrators and among local level school personnel also appeared to contribute to low job placement. At sites with high job placement rates, relatively consistent positive philosophies regarding vocational education and job placement were evident.

At high placement sites school personnel viewed job placement as one logical and desired outcome of the secondary vocational education program. While job placement was not necessarily viewed as the only or most important goal of vocational education, it was incorporated in the underlying philosophy, which impinged upon planning and allocation of fiscal resources. At sites with high job placement rates, interviewees not only voiced their commitment to job placement but also provided evidence that staff and other resources had been allocated for that purpose. At high placement sites there was more observable evidence that job placement was viewed as a desirable outcome of vocational education.

While philosophical positions embracing job placement as one desired outcome of secondary vocational education were necessary, they were not sufficient in themselves to enhance high job placement. Philosophical positions of school administrators, teachers, guidance counselors and community members which supported vocational education and job placement as one desired outcome of vocational education provided the foundation essential for decisions which ultimately influenced high job placement.

Legislation, Regulations and Funding Mechanisms. Federal and state legislation, regulations and funding mechanisms were relevant in establishing the context related to the issues in this study. State level legislation, regulations and funding mechanisms

were idiosyncratic and not highly comparable from site to site. The federal level legislation, regulations, and funding mechanisms, on the other hand, were meaningful in all the states and across all case study sites. Many educators interviewed perceived a great deal of contradiction and confusion in the federal legislation that affected admissions of students and funding of vocational education.

The Education Act of 1972 (P.L. 92-318) Section 1054 (2) stated that the U.S. Commissioner of Education will:

> "develop and carry out a program of occupational education that will...promote and encourage occupational preparation, counseling and guidance, and job placement or placement in postsecondary occupational education programs as a responsibility of elementary and secondary schools..."

The Vocational Education Amendments of 1976 (P.L. 94-482) mandated that one of the two major criteria for evaluating the effectiveness of vocational education would be the placement of former students in training-related jobs. In addition, requirements were placed in schools to enroll representative numbers from special populations.

Educators expressed concern and frustration about their compliance with the 1976 Amendments. One state vocational education director stated,"I really don't think there is any other legislation that is as hard to work with. It keeps a person on edge all the time as to whether the state is going to be in compliance." Local administrators interviewed concurred that the legislation regulations and funding mechanisms confounded their philosophy regarding job placement. Several attributed low placement rates to the lack of a consistent philosophy of vocational education between state and local level administrators. In one state the bureau of vocational education personnel viewed vocational education as terminal, limited to those students not planning to continue their education. This opinion conflicted with the local director's contention that the goal of vocational education is to interest students in further education. This discrepancy led to confusion and, according to the interviewee, lower rates of placement in jobs related to training. The federal legislation appeared to raise vocational educators awareness for job placement as a desired outcome of secondary vocational education programs. Vocational educators were very much aware that funding was based upon enrollments which mandated inclusion of special populations who historically have had problems in job placement. Personnel in the low placement sites appeared to be more frustrated because of the seemingly contradictory legislation, the lack of consistency in philosophy across the levels of policy-makers and the confusing mechanisms of compliance related to funding for secondary vocational education programs.

Curriculum. Relevant vocational education curriculum based upon the needs of local employers was considered absolutely necessary for high job placement. Haynes (1970) and Smiley (1976) maintained that unless curriculum is matched to employer needs, employers develop unfavorable attitudes towards hiring former vocational education students. The literature corroborated what all employers interviewed at the case sites strongly emphasized, that in order to enhance job placement in local businesses and industries, former secondary vocational education students must:

- have a positive work attitude,
- have a solid foundation of basic computation and communication skills,
- have good interpersonal skills, and
- have developed basic understanding of and skills for working in the occupation with appropriate tools and equipment.

It was found that job placement was high at case study sites where the curriculum had been periodically reviewed and revised for relevance to future employees of local businesses and industries. Rall and O'Brumen (1977) stressed that local employers must be consulted when considering revisions in vocational education curriculum in order to assure that skills will be taught for current available jobs. At high job placement sites schools had a history of strong alliance with the local economic community through advisory groups. Teachers and administrators at these sites not only met with advisory group members regularly and frequently, they also implemented their recommendations whenever feasible. Advisory group members interviewed at high placement sites remarked that they felt "involved and useful", that their advice was not only sought regarding a number of issues, but was also implemented. Several advisory committee members shared evidence of how the advisory committee had been effective in changing the curriculum. As a result, employers at these sites appeared to have more confidence in the training of former vocational education students and contacted the teacher for recommendations whenever there were job openings.

Findings from the literture review and the case study sites indicated that there was no agreement whether vocational education curricula should emphasize general skill training or specific skill training. Employers interviewed at case study sites appeared to favor general skill training. Most employers maintained that specific skill training rarely matched their specialized needs. Specific skill training was not viewed as desirable as a viable command of basic computation and communcation skills

along with adequate occupation-related skills to learn the job once hired. Most employers preferred to provide on-the-job training for highly specialized skills to meet their unique needs.

In summarizing the importance of curriculum, at high placement sites the vocational education curriculum was relevant to the local employers' needs. Suggestions received from advisory committee members were incorporated into periodic revisions of the curriculum. The curriculum was oriented to jobs found in local business and industry, but was not necessarily highly skill-specialized.

Teachers. Teachers with a high level of commitment to preparing their students for entry into the labor market were observed at the high placement sites. Interviewees at high and low placement sites frequently volunteered that teachers are the key to placement. Employer sentiment was expressed by one employer when he said, "Vocational programs are going to be just as good as the instructors they have. If they have a good set of instructors they will put out a good set of graduates." At high placement sites, teachers appeared to agree with the teacher who expressed very strongly, "Placement is my responsibility." The teachers' fundamental belief that they were responsible to some degree for the placement of their students appeared to be more significant than their close contact with employers.

Teachers at high placement sites not only taught from a relevant curriculum that included job seeking skills, they also maintained communication with employers to inquire about jobs in order to recommend students. At high placement sites, a large proportion of teachers seemed to agree with one teacher who said, "Honest communication works best over the long haul." Teachers believed that they build their relationships with employers on a basis of trust, that the employers had learned to rely upon their judgement about former or current students as prospective employees.

Teachers at high placement sites frequently attempted to assess the needs of local employers, most often informally and through meetings or discussions with advisory council members. In smaller communities, teachers knew proportionately more employers, had more opportunities for casual interactions with them, and had developed long term reciprocal relationships which benefited both the schools and the businesses.

Teachers at both high and low placement sites pointed out that they did not have sufficient time for activities that would enhance job placement of their students. They felt that the paperwork in writing comprehensive recommendations for students was

burdensome. Unless they were cooperative education teachers they had little or no time to initiate and maintain contact with employees. Teachers had little time to follow-up former students or to investigate the skill and labor needs of local businesses and industries.

While many teachers felt they had insufficient time to upgrade their skills in the field, those at the low placement sites were less enthusiastic about upgrading their skills. Teachers at high placement sites were more prone to engage in opportunites to upgrade skills through part-time jobs, summertime employment, inservice training, and owning a small business.

Teachers at the high placement site perceived that they received more support from the school administration and from the community for their vocational education programs and for job placement than teachers at low placement sites. Most teachers at high placement sites agreed that they spent "a great deal of effort in job placement" even though they did not believe it was a stayed requirement of the their position nor was it ever included in any evaluation cirteria. As a result of their perceptions, teachers at high placement sites invested more time and effort in discerning employer skill needs, in updating their knowledge to teach relevant skills, in seeking jobs in the local labor market for students, and in recommending students for these jobs. While teachers at low placement sites placed students in jobs whenever they could, they appeared less motivated to do so, perceived more constraints, both in the educational system and in the community, to additional job placement activities on their part.

In summary, most interviewees viewed teachers as the single most important factor in the educational system to influence job placement. Teachers agreed at both high and low placement sites that their role was important but pointed out the multitude of constraints preventing high rates of placing their students in related jobs.

Admissions. One of the constraints teachers pointed out most often was their lack of control over admissions. There were marked differences in admissions policies among the case study sites which appeared to influence the job placement rates of former vocational education students. At high job placement sites admission of students was more tightly controlled than in low placement sites. While at one job placement site students with high grades and an "all American Boy or Girl" image were selected, at some low placement sites vocational education was regarded as a program to "get rid of the problem students". In some communities with a high labor demand, students with less than adequate communication or computation skills were enrolled in programs related to high-demand jobs which ultimately lowered their chances for placement or success in jobs. At some sites, students were

frequently forced to accept their second or third choices in order to be enrolled in vocational education programs. It appears that this decreased their motivation and commitment to find and succeed in related jobs. While at high placement sites admissions policies were prone to be based upon aptitude, grades, test-scores, vocational goals and employability, at low placement sites they were often based upon the number of slots that were available or needed to be filled on a "first-come, first-served" basis. At sites with high job placement rates students were selected more systematically with placement in related jobs as a major goal of the vocational education program. Vocational educators frequently complained that they had no control over admissions even though their programs were evaluated by the number of students placed in training-related fields. One state's chief administrator for secondary vocational education emphasized that "you have to control what comes in the front door if you are going to measure what goes out the back."

Teachers strongly believed that placement rates would be improved considerably if admissions were based upon their selection of students who were motivated to succeed in the vocational education program. Teachers wanted students who had the aptitude to learn the necessary skills, who had a good attitude toward work, and who met the employers' requirements. Extreme variations were apparent in the amount of control teachers had in selecting students at the case study sites. Most often they had little or no control at the low placement sites, while at some high placement sites teachers interviewed prospective enrollees and selected students who appeared to be highly motivated and had other qualitites that would ensure success in their programs. Teachers at low placement sites expressed a great deal of frustration and disappointment in admissions policies which they perceived as impossible obstacles to effective job placement. They felt that students were admitted regardless of their aptitude, motivation or projected employability in order to fill slots, to keep enrollment high in order to receive vocational education funding, and to "dump" incorrigible or academically deficient students. Several teachers concurred that "we don't have control over who comes into the programs, so placement can't be an adequate reflection of our teaching abilities."

There have been numerous studies examining employment based on race (Feldmand 1972), social class (Saunders 1974), sex (Corcoran 1979), and handicap conditions (Gardner and Warrent 1978). These studies concluded that racial minorities, persons from low socio-economic backgrounds, females, youth, and the handicapped encounter some degree of discrimination when seeking employment. The extent to which these groups are enrolled in vocational education programs could therefore affect job placement rates.

Counter to other studies, the analysis of existing data indicated that the percent of disadvantaged enrolled in vocational

education programs correlated positively with job placement rates. It appeared that non-white and disadvantaged former students had a higher ratio of job placement as compared to whites and those not identified as disadvantaged.

The findings from the case studies indicated that higher job placement rates were related to higher percent of white former students who were not designated as disadvantaged. At the site with the highest job placement rate, almost all of the current and former students were white, few were considered disadvantaged or handicapped, and there was little, if any, crossover of sexes into non-traditional program areas. While the populations at the other sites were more heterogenous, it appeared that former students trained in program areas traditionally considered appropriate for their age, sex, race or special designation had higher rates of job placement. Several interviewees cautiously expressed the opinion that meeting the requirements of the federal mandates for enrollments of special populations in vocational education programs appeared to reflect the confusion that decision makers feel about the role of vocational education programs in secondary schools.

It appeared that compliance with federal legislation was a driving force for determining written policies at some sites. It was found, however, that traditional practices and practical considerations in keeping with community expectations were more likely to determine the actual admisssions criteria.

At this preliminary stage of analysis, the lack of consistancy between the findings from the existing data and the case studies can be attributed to the difference in the modes of collecting and analyzing the data. It is hoped that further analysis of these data and the findings from the questionnaire phase of the study will provide further insights.

Other Factors. There were no apparent differences in the methods of instruction and evaluation of student performances between high and low placement sites. Student involvement in cooperative education and student clubs did emerge as significant at high placement sites. Employers felt that students who had participated in cooperative education programs learned how to work in their business or industry and were more desirable as employees than those whose training was only classroom based. Several interviewees at high placement sites pointed out that they or someone they knew "got the job because of being in co-op". At high placement sites, cooperative education placements were made in training-related areas more often than at low placement sites where work experience placement (not necessarily related to training) prevailed.

Student vocational clubs were more visible at high placement sites. Teachers integrated the club activities into the classroom activities and encouraged club membership. Students had opportunities for developing leadership skills traveling to regional meetings, and participating in contests. Student involvement in vocational clubs appeared to strengthen their commitment to the vocational field. At high placement sites vocational clubs were more visible. Integration of club activities into the instructional process appeared to encourage student involvement with employers.

Higher job placement occurred where the schools and community concurred in viewing vocationally-educated students as a valued economic resource. At sites with high job placement rates the schools promoted the vocational education program in the community. At high placement sites parents strongly believed that vocational education would provide their children with salable skills whether they used them immediately after graduation, later in life, or as a means of support for further education. Most parents at these sites supported the vocational education program by encouraging their children's participation. In addition some parents also actively supported student organizations, developed cooperative programs in their own businesses, and helped raise funds for facilities and equipment.

GENERAL IMPRESSIONS

If vocational educators are to maximize placement rates for vocational education students, it appears that the following points should be given careful attention. Higher job placement exists in those schools where:

- o Key actors in the school system have a clear and consistent understanding of the purposes of the vocational education program.
- o Administrators have a positive regard for vocational education.
  - Principals are key persons because of their leadership role, control of resources, and scheduling.
- o There is a high level of enthusiasm for job placement.
- o Students admission to programs is tightly controlled.
- o Teachers are committed to the position that they have a great amount of responsibility for placing students.
- o Cooperative education programs are actually placing students in jobs related to their training program.

- Job placement rates are used in program planning and evaluation efforts.
- Teachers have a greater knowledge of the needs of business and industry needs.
- Teachers have comprehensive and systematic contact with business and industry.
- Teachers possess the latest skills used in the jobs for which they are training individuals.
- Citizen advisory committees meet frequently, have a sharply defined role, and have meaningful involvement in critical decision areas.
- Flexible scheduling encourages participation in vocational education programs.
- Student vocational clubs are encouraged and promoted in the school and community.
- Vocational education curriculum is frequently revised to reflect changing labor market skill needs.

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